

Media Release



Federation of
Community Legal Centres
VICTORIA

New report urges justice for taxi drivers

Sunday 26 August 2012 – embargoed until 12.01am Monday 27 August 2012

Strong recommendations to achieve a fairer and safer working environment for Victoria's taxi drivers are urged in a new report to be launched on Monday by Mr Brian Howe AO, chair of the Independent Inquiry into Insecure Work in Australia and a former deputy prime minister.

With few legal rights and little bargaining power, taxi drivers work long hours in difficult and dangerous conditions while struggling to earn a basic wage. They exemplify insecure work and the shift of risk from employer to employee, with drivers bearing the obligations of employees but without their legal status or the protections they deserve.

In the driver's seat: Achieving justice for taxi drivers in Victoria addresses these problems by documenting work undertaken in 2011 by the Taxi Driver Legal Clinic, a joint project to address the legal problems of low income taxi drivers run by the Federation of Community Legal Centres and Footscray Community Legal Centre.

Among seven recommendations, the report calls for the scrapping of bailment agreements that exploit drivers, robust reform of insurance arrangements to minimise the current exposure of taxi drivers to serious and unfair financial risk, and an audit of Victorian taxi clubs geared to winding up those clubs whose activities are not in the public interest.

The report was appended to the second of two formal submissions made by the Federation to the Taxi Industry Inquiry currently being undertaken by Professor Allan Fels AO. Professor Fels will attend the launch and speak independently regarding the reforms he has proposed.

"Our work with Melbourne's taxi drivers has shown us that the industry needs urgent reform," said report author and community lawyer, Lucie O'Brien, today.

"We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Taxi Industry Inquiry and we strongly support Professor Fels' proposals. These reforms will benefit the whole community. By improving working conditions, they'll reduce driver turnover and improve standards in the industry," she said.

Clients of the Taxi Driver Legal Clinic will be available for media interview.

In the driver's seat: Achieving justice for taxi drivers in Victoria will be launched at 4pm on Monday 27 August 2012 at the Leo Cussen Institute, 360 Little Bourke Street Melbourne. Media are invited, but are encouraged to RSVP to Darren Lewin-Hill via darren.lewin-hill@fclc.org.au or 0488 773 535.

A copy of the report is available at <http://bit.ly/PFVIHr>

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